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31 March 1960

MEMORANDUM FOR THE DIRECTOR

SUBJECT: General Power's Testimony to the Mahon Committee, 22 March 1960

1. My overall reaction to this testimony is that General Power, who is responsible for some 90 percent of the West's capacity to deliver megatons, was at pains to establish that he and his command are competent, confident, and ready to cope with any situation that might arise. The Committee clearly respected him for this, but challenged him on several critical points. These challenges brought responses which, at least where intelligence on the USSR was involved, gave an impression of much greater certainty than we gave in recent NIE's and in the CIA testimony to the Mahon Committee in January.

2. The discussion on intelligence was mainly about the identification and location of targets in the USSR, especially Soviet missile launching sites. It recurred several times during the hearing, and I have marked the main points with double clips. Committee members identified in the record as participating in this discussion were Congressmen Mahon, Sikes, Flood, Ford, Laird and Thomson. At two points the discussion went off the record and others may have participated.

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3. Congressman Mahon initiated the discussion by asking (p. 2941) how General Power expected to neutralize Soviet attack capabilities when we do not and probably will not know where their missile launching sites are. Power said he thought we would and [redacted] At this point he merely stated that intelligence was beginning to get some indications of likely launching areas. Later, Sikes criticized "fuzzy" CIA briefings (p. 2998) and asked how Power could be so confident about where his targets were, to which Power responded by describing SAC's detailed target folders. This exchange did not deal specifically with missile sites, but it and a similar exchange with Ford (p. 3047) created a general impression that SAC's targeting information was quite firm.

4. Ford's questioning (p. 3051) finally brought Power's assertion that in his opinion there are at least 26 to 28 sites that Air Force Intelligence is "reasonably sure" are operational ICBM sites.

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He attributed this to General Walsh, who he said had told him of some 54 possibilities, some 26 of which General Walsh was "reasonably sure" about. He said he had been briefed for three hours on the subject, that the information was in process of being developed like a jigsaw puzzle, and that the pieces were starting to fall into place. In response to a question, he said he didn't know if CIA agreed with the Air Force analysis.

5. Later (p. 3089), in an exchange with Flood and Laird, General Power modified his statement to indicate that there are 26 places where "there is real good evidence that they are going to have an ICBM site." This occurred after Flood had interpreted 50 sites to mean that the Soviets now have 300 missiles, the figure General Power had previously used in public and which he had called "hypothetical" (p. 2983). Laird took the discussion off the record at this point, and when Thomson brought up the question of what CIA thought about target identifications it went off the record again (p. 3120).

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6. The probable source for General Power's statements on ICBM sites is the [REDACTED] team's briefing, although when given to the USIB even that briefing did not include as many as 50 specific locations. I also note that the GMAIC working group on site deployment made a preliminary report on 25 March in which they said they had examined 28 suspect locations. Of these, in addition to Tyura Tam and Kapustin Yar, they evaluated only one (Berezovka near Saratov) as a possible ICBM site under construction. Representatives of the [REDACTED] team audited this working group. My own judgment, after hearing both briefings, is that we have not yet turned up anything that we can be "reasonably sure" is an operational ICBM site.

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7. When you testified to the Mahon Committee on 11 January, you were asked by Congressman Thomson whether we had identified any Soviet missile launching sites under construction, other than Tyura Tam and Kapustin Yar. You said (p. 7) "Not apart from these. We have some indications." You noted that their operational sites would probably be fairly simple and mentioned rail mobility. You added that we "hope to be able to come before you later and be able to tell you about (operational sites), but we cannot today." In my opinion, your testimony remains valid at the present time.

8. Other points of particular interest are marked with single clips. They include:

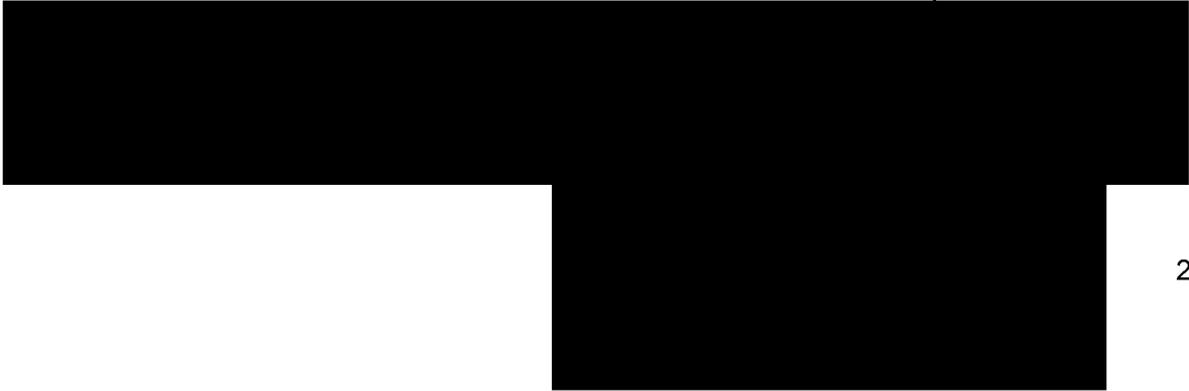
a. 1961-1963 as a period when the Soviets may feel they have their greatest relative capability versus the US (pp. 2951-52 and p. 3115).

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b. Assertion that SAC can attack the USSR in such a way as to prevent fall-out from damaging friendly countries, and Committee skepticism about this (pp. 2988 ff.).



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